

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3046

INFO AMCONSULCALCUTTA

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 17269

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN IN US

SUBJECT: INDIAN MINE DISASTER ASSISTANCE REQUEST

URGENT: PLEASE PASS TO MR. MIRMALAI (RES. 703 978 4381-
OFFICE- 703 235 1582) MINING ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY ADMINI-
STRATION (MESA)

1. IN THE ABSENCE OF N.P. DUBE, SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF
LABOR, WHO, IN COLLABORATION WITH M.A.
WADUD KHAN, SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF STEEL, IS IN CHARGE OF
RESCUE OPERATIONS OF THE CHASNALA COLLIERY NEAR
DHANBAD, BIHAR STATE, EMBASSY OFFICERS CONTACTED T.S.
SANKARAN, JOINT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF LABOR, FOR DETAILS ON
THE COAL MINE DISASTER.

2. WITH TWO OR THREE PUMPS NOW OPERATING AT 250-500 GALLONS
PER MINUTE EACH AND SEEPAGE ESTIMATED AT 500 GALLONS PER
MINUTE, CURRENT RESCUE
OPERATIONS APPEAR TO BE DOING LITTLE MORE THAN
STABILIZING THE WATER LEVEL. HOWEVER, GOI HOPES TO HAVE A
TOTAL OF 15 PUMPS OF 250-500 GALLONS PER MINUTE CAPACITY
IN OPERATION WITHIN TWO DAYS TIME. TOTAL VOLUME OF WATER IS
ESTIMATED AT 110 MILLION GALLONS. DEPTH OF MINE IS APPROXIMATELY
1000 FEET WITH WATER DEPTH OF ABOUT 800 FEET. TWO SHAFTS OF
24 FEET DIAMETER EACH PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE MINE. SURFACE
CONDITIONS WERE REPORTED TO BE SOUND.

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3. GOI IS SEEKING FROM US 10 SUBMERSIBLE PUMPS (OR EQUIVALENT) WITH FLAME-PROOF MOTORS HAVING DISCHARGE CAPACITY OF 2500 GALLONS PER MINUTE EACH. PUMPS SHOULD BE 440 OR 550 VOLT (PREFERABLY) 50 CYCLE, 3 PHASE, WITH HEAD NOT LESS THAN 600 FEET BUT UP TO 1000 FEET. POWER CABLES OF 800 FEET TO 1200 FEET SHOULD ACCOMPANY EACH PUMP. LOCAL POWER SUPPLY IS ADEQUATE. SANKARAN HAS ASSURED US THAT COUPLINGS, HOSE AND PIPE ARE AVAILABLE LOCALLY, BUT WE BELIEVE MESA SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT GOI OPERATES ON METRIC SYSTEM.

4. MINE CHARACTERISTICS INCLUDE 3 HORIZONS; THE FIRST LEVEL AT 560 FEET, SECOND LEVEL AT 710 FEET AND THIRD LEVEL AT 900 FEET. THE HORIZONTAL SHAFTS ARE 8 FEET HIGH AND 14 FEET WIDE WITH A TOTAL LENGTH OF ABOUT 3 MILES. THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL SHAFTS ARE SUPPORTED BY STEEL; HOWEVER, SANKARAN WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE DETAILS ON SIZE OR FREQUENCY OF SUPPORTS.

5. THE WATER IS REPORTED TO CONTAIN MUD, CLAY AND SOME SAND. SOURCE OF WATER IS FROM OLD WORKINGS SOME 800 FEET AWAY ON A 1 TO 1.2 INCLINE. WATER PUMPED FROM THE MINE WILL BE DISCHARGED IN THE DAMODAR RIVER, ROUGHLY .5 KMS AWAY.

6. ACCORDING TO MR. SANKARAN, ONLY WASHINGTON HAS BEEN APPROACHED FOR ASSISTANCE. HOWEVER, PRESS REPORTS INDICATED GOI HAD SOLICITED SUPPORT FROM USSR AND POLAND AS WELL AS THE US.

7. LATEST COUNT INDICATED THAT 372 PERSONS WERE TRAPPED IN THE MINE, WHICH BELONGS TO INDIAN IRON AND STEEL COMPANY NOW UNDER GOI MANAGEMENT. SANKARAN SAID THAT IF MINE COULD BE DRAINED WITHIN 7 DAYS, THERE MIGHT BE SOME HOPE FOR SURVIVORS.

8. GOI REQUEST THAT THE WEIGHT AND SIZE OF SHIPMENT BE CONVEYED ASAP IN ORDER TO ARRANGE TRANSFER BY AIR FROM EITHER BOMBAY OR DELHI TO RANCHI.

9. THE ABOVE INFORMATION HAS BEEN CONVEYED TO MESA (MR. MIRMALAI) VIA TELEPHONE. EMBASSY IS ALSO KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH UNCLASSIFIED

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GOI OFFICIALS ON TECHNICAL DETAILS.

10. IF EQUIPMENT IS TO ARRIVE BY WEDNESDAY, IT MUST BE ON AIR INDIA FLIGHT 102, DEPARTING NEW YORK 2045 MONDAY EVENING. SAXBE

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